

## **Broadbents Store**

### **Yesteryears by Richard Van Wagoner**

Technically, I am not digressing from our Main Street series today by featuring Broadbents. In turn-of-the-century Lehi, First East street was called East Main. Fronting on the roadway was a sizeable contingent of business houses including the Stoker Cash Grocery Store, Asher Tin Shop, Heber Comer's cobbler shop, the Lehi Banner, Harriet Jacob's Millinery, James Kirkham and Sons Mercantile and the Standard Knitting Factory.

Hundreds of Lehi firms have engaged in trade since the town was incorporated. Many of these businesses, poorly conceived and badly mismanaged, failed quickly. Other flamed brightly for a time only to be eventually snuffed out by the fickle winds of commerce.

In turns of pure longevity, only the Lehi Drug Store can best Broadbent's phenomenal record of over 100 years of prosperity. (Lehi Drug Store is also now out of business). Though the store historically has been Broadbent & Son, Broadbent & Son's Emporium, Broadbent's Music Store, Lehi Musical Emporium, Broadbent & Son General Store, and Broadbent & Son's Department Store, it has remained a family-owned corporation since 1882.

In the fall of 1859, English immigrants Joseph and Sarah Broadbent arrived in Lehi after trekking across the plains with a handcart. For the next twenty-three years, Broadbent eked out a living farming and repairing clocks. His frugal wife, and excellent seamstress started up a small home industry by turning bolts of blue denim into overalls and jumpers. Her husband added the finishing touch of copper rivets, a symbol of well-made clothing of the day.

In 1882, Mrs. Broadbent suggested that the family open a small mercantile. Accordingly Joseph and his nineteen-year-old son Joseph Samuel built a fifteen-by-thirty foot wooden room on the north end of their adobe home (the northeast corner of First North and First East). In addition to watch repair and jewelry work, Broadbent & Son carried a small line of merchandise, furniture, and Sarah Broadbent's homemade work clothing.

The Broadbent's industriousness brought them immediate success. In the mid-1880's, they more than doubled the size of their place by building a second wooden addition on the north of the original store. They then maintained two department: dry goods and grocery.

Lehi's economy experienced a dramatic upsurge in the 1890's because of the sugar factory. Broadbent's sought to capitalize on this commercial windfall by expanding their business. In the summer of 1892, they constructed the elegant two-story structure which remains the heart of the store today.

Although the trade name "Broadbent & Son" implies just menfolk, Broadbent women have been an integral part of the business from the beginning. In addition to Sarah Broadbent's hand sewing work clothing, her daughter Geneva (Lott) became a full-time clerk in 1889. Through her efforts and artistic abilities, a popular millinery department was established on the first floor of the new 1892 store. The "Gay Nineties" were in full swing, and ladies wanted the latest styles in hats, trimmings, ribbons, feathers, and balmorals. A wide assortment of notions including needles, pins, and thimbles were also part of this department.

Once women were bedecked in their new headgear a photograph was suggested. A photography studio had been set up in the second story of the new building (see the stairway to the left in the photograph). When this two-story facility had been completed, the two older buildings became the grocery and dry goods departments.

Joseph Broadbent essentially attended to the clock repair and jewelry business while depending on his son Joseph Samuel to handle all other aspects of the firm. Young Broadbent was called to serve a mission to great britain in 1896. Worried about what would happen to the store in his absence, he told his sister Geneva that he would not go unless she agreed to take full charge of the business until he returned. Though she was contemplating marriage in the near future, she told him "to go, and that I would do the very best I could."

Much was expected of Geneva Broadbent--then only a woman of twenty-three. "It was now my responsibility" she wrote, "to do the buying, selling, bookkeeping, and running the millinery department. Also, to see that Joseph's family of five were taken care of and the necessary money sent to him each month, and incidently, to see that father, stepmother and I had some of the necessities of life." She was a happy woman to see the return of her

missionary brother.

Although, Joseph Broadbent died in 1920, his son made few changes to the store until 1933. During the depths of the Great Depression, Joseph S. revamped their store to enhance the grocery business. A revolutionary “help yourself system was installed for the “modern day shopper.” Customers for the first time were allowed to select their own articles, put them in a basket, and then pay for them at the counter.

Joseph S. Broadbent died in 1937, leaving the management of the store to his twenty-year-old son John. Despite his youth, John was no novice in the mercantile business. From his earliest years, he had worked alongside his father, learning the business from top to bottom. When he was old enough to drive a team and wagon, young John was in charge of home deliveries. John considered his high school graduation, “a nice gesture” because he was absent so frequently in order to help out in the store.

John married Alice David in 1938 and (like the Broadbent women before her) Alice, with her common sense and artistic flair, became a major part of the store’s continued success. In the early years of World War II, John and Alice decided to initiate a major renovation of the business. To commemorate the firm’s sixtieth anniversary, the original 1882 and mid-1880s buildings were demolished, along with the old adobe Broadbent home. A new brick “Food Market,” built on the site of the original store, opened for business during the first week of September 1942. An appliance and gift salesroom was added to the south in 1948. In 1957, a 2, 178 square-foot clothing and drygoods additions was built onto the north of the 1892-built store.

In order to expand their furniture business, John and Alice built a large addition onto the south of the store (where the old Broadbent home had formerly been). Grand opening for this new facility was held March 9-11, 1967

Broadbent’s in 1991 is much more than a general store. It is a one-stop shopping center catering not only to the needs of the neighborhood, but to a county-wide clientele as well. John and Alice, along with their children Nann, David and Betty, have long maintained the Broadbent traditions of friendliness, service and hard work. In addition they have added a few customs of their own, particularly during the Christmas season.

In 1944, near the end of World War II, Alice felt Lehi townspeople needed a lift of

spirits. So she bought a miniature nativity scene and arranged it in the showroom window. Because of wartime shortages, the characters were simply cardboard cutouts--but townspeople loved them. Since then she has expanded the display and many Lehi citizens, child and adult alike, consider an annual visit to the window display a vital part of their Christmas traditions.

As small boys , growing up two blocks from Broadbents, my brother Gill and I counted each crisp autumn day until the annual opening of the store's enchanting "Toyland". The unveiling usually took place shortly after Thanksgiving. Electric trains, Red Ryder BB guns, erector sets, Roy Rogers cap pistols, Lone Ranger masks, Prince Valiant outfits-we wanted them all. And we visited the store nearly every day to examine each toy to our heart's content. Though stores now display toys year round, that long-ago Broadbent's Christmas magic has never been entirely forgotten.

Broadbent's have always taken great pride in creating the old fashioned holiday atmosphere of yesteryear. Basically it sells the same type of merchandise it did over a century ago. But unlike many of the large chain stores of today, you find a friendly sales clerk at Broadbent's when you need one. While the store cannot offer some of the features of Fred Meyers, Sears and K-Mart, it does offer the personal care and quality services that one seldom finds elsewhere. Such simple down-to earth qualities will alway be in demand.